



Cornell NRC rankings-related questions:

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1. How did Cornell fare in the latest NRC assessment?

A>Overall, Cornell did very well. Cornell had more research doctorate fields ranked than any other private institution, and Cornell fields from all NRC disciplines were represented in the top 10 on two overall rankings measures, which testifies to our breadth of study.

In the top 10 rankings, we had 29 Cornell fields (R-rankings) and 20 fields (S-rankings). The top 20 rankings included the vast majority of Cornell fields: 47 fields (R-ranking, over 75%, and 40 fields (S-ranking), over two-thirds.

Our top fields were food science and technology (1-11 R-ranking) and plant science (1-8 S-rankings)

2. How does Cornell rank compared to other institutions?

A>By design, the NRC chose a methodology that made it difficult to rank institutions into a single ordinal list. Moreover, some institutions submitted only one or two of their strongest programs, while others, including Cornell, submitted data for many programs. Cornell had 61 research doctorate fields ranked – more than any other private institution.

Cornell has 81 research doctorate fields in the Graduate School and 7 research doctorate fields in the Weill Cornell Graduate School of Medical Sciences. Cornell submitted data for 63 research doctorate fields, but 61 were included in the rankings. Not all fields fit the NRC criteria for inclusion in the study, either because they did not match well to any of the NRC subject area definitions because of their interdisciplinary structure or they did not meet the size threshold needed to participate.

3. What has changed about doctoral study since the data were collected in 2006?

A> According to Graduate School analysis, since 2005 the Graduate School has become more competitive: applications to doctoral study increased 5%; the acceptance rate has declined from 17% to 15%; the matriculation rate has increased from 38% to 42%; and, the university has provided more funding for graduate student assistantships and fellowships. The number of PhDs awarded in the social sciences and life sciences has also gone up by 10% and 5%, respectively. Cornell faculty has changed

considerably since the NRC data were collected as well. Nearly one in five faculty members currently at Cornell were not here in 2005 when the data were collected. The new hires resulted in a modest increase in the number of women and minority faculty members.

4. How will Cornell use the Assessment?

A>Cornell University regularly reviews all aspects of its graduate and doctoral programs, and the latest NRC study is one more tool in that process. Cornell will carefully review the results from these analyses to determine how they can be used to improve our ongoing efforts to enhance doctoral education at Cornell, and to help continually provide high-quality degree programs across our 92 major fields of study. In the past, Cornell has not used NRC data alone to change, add or eliminate programs.

5. How can students, faculty, and others access and use this information?

A>The data revealed in this latest ranking will be available online through the NRC Web site, <http://researchdocs.nas.edu/>, enabling students, potential students, faculty and others to compare programs across a range of interests. It provides a new level of detail that provides a better gauge with which to compare programs and their elements.

6. What other initiatives are you engaged in to improve doctoral education?

A>Our new university strategic plan, Cornell University at its Sesquicentennial, 2010-2015 (<http://www.cornell.edu/strategicplan/>) includes strategic initiatives focusing on supporting both graduate and undergraduate teaching, learning, and mentoring, and emphasizes the need to develop quantitative and qualitative indicators for regularly assessing and reporting on progress, appropriate to the discipline and degree. A Graduate Education Assessment Committee is leading the development of an educational goals/outcomes statement for the Graduate School, particularly focusing on graduate research degrees and will recommend metrics that could be used to monitor progress toward these educational goals/outcomes for graduate education. In addition, Cornell is currently engaged in our reaccreditation effort through the Middle States Commission on Higher Education. The self-study and reaccreditation effort includes analysis of the quality of our graduate research programs and recommendations for further strengthening our programs.

7. How do the results on diversity compare to your institution's mission regarding diversity?

A>One of the seven overarching initiatives in Cornell's strategic plan (2010-2015) focuses on making significant progress toward a more diverse faculty, student body, and staff. We recognize that the quality of graduate students is critical to the stature of academic departments and programs and to recruiting excellent faculty. Additionally, enhancing diversity is critical to building a strong pipeline of candidates into the academic and professional fields. With discussion across the Cornell community, the university leadership will establish explicit goals for graduate student diversity, considering appropriate pipelines and discipline-specific demographics. For example, many STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) disciplines will focus on increasing racial, ethnic, and gender diversity, whereas other disciplines may focus more on racial and ethnic diversity. We remain committed to

offering competitive stipends and health benefits for graduate students, and to offering effective and creative mechanisms for supporting the development of graduate students as researchers, teachers, and professionals. The field-specific NRC data on diversity of the academic environment will help inform our efforts toward these goals.